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ABSTRACT

A non-profit, non-partisan educational organization, the League of United Latin American Citizens National Education Service Centers (LNESC) is engaged in the field of higher education, with primary emphasis on Hispanic Americans. One of LNESC's objectives is to make institutions of higher education, foundations, corporations, and Federal agencies more aware of the educational problems faced by Hispanic Americans, with intent to bring about an increased concentration of resources on the problems. However, due to the lack of research data available, it is difficult to remedy the serious educational problems confronting Hispanics. This void reflects the need for educational research efforts on Hispanics in the various organizational components of the National Institute of Education (NIE) in addition to its current research efforts. Therefore, it is indispensable that the Hispanic American community and its educational problems be understood by NIE. With a more positive relationship between Hispanics and NIE, there will be a more meaningful utilization of our mutual resources, a greater possibility for quality education through research, and the development of long and short range plans to complement and benefit one another. Therefore, LNESC firmly supports the concept of NIE to assist this country in providing equal educational opportunity by taking on a vigorous leadership with regard to conducting the overall research and development efforts in education. (NQ)

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STATEMENT

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before the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR
SELECT SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

on

REAUTHORIZATION OF THE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

November 4, 1975

RC009151

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, I am Roger W. Gomez, Legislative Assistant for the National Education Service Centers (NESC), a non-profit, non-partisan educational organization sponsored by LULAC, the League of United Latin American Citizens. Accompanying me is Ms. Helena A. Grady, Director of Research for LNESC.

On behalf of LULAC, the Education Centers and Hispanic American citizens, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the occasion to appear before you today to convey our concerns on the reauthorization of NIE (HR 5988).

First of all, I would like to present you with a short brief on our organization, its purposes and objectives. LNESC is engaged in the field of higher education with primary emphasis on Hispanics. Our principal objectives are to:

1) Increase the number of persons attending America's colleges and universities with special emphasis on Hispanic American students.

2) Increase the retention rate of Hispanic American students in colleges and universities.

3) Increase the awareness of the educational problems faced by the Hispanic community to institutions of higher education, foundations, corporations, and federal agencies with intent to bring about an increased concentration of resources on the problem.

As of August, 1975, our eleven (11) field offices located in nine states had provided the following services:

- 14,000+ students have been accepted into colleges and universities
- 9,200 students have enrolled in post secondary schools of their choice
- 31,400 students have received some form of counseling/assistance
- over $10,000,000 has been generated as financial aid

Therefore, LNESC has had a significant national impact in upgrading the educational skills of a segment of our population which has traditionally been denied the equal opportunity of higher education. As the nation's oldest and fastest growing minority group, the Spanish surnamed people are only too keenly aware that their dismal educational record will never be overcome unless larger numbers of Hispanic leaders, decision-makers, businessmen, professionals, and educators are produced by the institutions of higher education in this country.

The following statistics reflect the inequities faced by Hispanics in education:

- Less than 5% of Hispanic children eligible for bilingual education are being reached in the nation's elementary schools.
- Median school years completed by Americans of Spanish heritage are only 9.6 years as compared to 12.1 years for Americans as a whole.
- 36% of the Hispanic population over 24 completed 4 years of high school as compared to 52.3% of the total U.S. population.
- Only 14% of the Hispanic adults over 25 had completed college including 6% who had completed 4 or more years. For the total population it was 21% and 11% respectively.

These figures clearly indicate that Hispanics have been denied equal education opportunities.

The federal government has taken on the responsibility of providing the leadership in the educational process and to this end, NIE was created. The legislation authorizing its creation in 1972 explicitly stated that it was the intention of the United States Congress to "provide to every person an equal opportunity to receive an education of high quality regardless of his race, color, religion, sex, national origin, or social class".

Furthermore, it was outlined that greater research efforts in the field of education are needed in order to gain and achieve the goal of quality education. NIE was mandated to "help solve or alleviate the problems of, and promote the renewal of American education to strengthen the scientific and technological foundations of education through an effective educational research and development system". Thus, NIE was instituted to conduct educational research activities to insure educational opportunities for all segments of the American population. In-depth research studies on Hispanics have been sponsored by the Institute but not to the extend required to investigate the underlying causes of their low educational achievements. Results of more concentrated studies are of pivotal importance, since it is through such research that educators can propose and implement solutions to remedy the educational inequities faced by Hispanics. The need for this research is urgent if Hispanic Americans are to overcome the educational barriers that they confront because of their unique cultural and linguistic background.

In fiscal year 1973, grant awards for Hispanic programs sponsored by NIE averaged $178,000 while the average grant award for similar black programs was $350,000 or nearly twice that of Hispanic programs. These disproportionate allocations are true of each fiscal year with the exception of fiscal year 1975 when $253,000 was awarded for black programs and $242,000 for Hispanic programs. We in no way wish to suggest that funding for black programs be reduced, however, we simply want to point out the fact that Hispanics are not receiving a fair share.

Over the past decade and a half, the federal government has spent over a billion dollars on research and development on the nation's educational problems and billions more on aid to schools and school districts, yet little has been done specifically to assist Hispanics in upgrading educational skills as is evidenced by their low educational achievement. NIE sponsored research activities

are meant to be problem solving, emphasizing applied research to educational problems through research and development. In this respect NIE has been granted the authority to partake in new and innovative ideas in different areas of education by enlarging and strengthening the foundation of education. The results are then studied by educational practitioners and integrated into the development and implementation of educational programs. Thus, the federal government created NIE to meet the educational research needs of the nation, an extremely worthwhile plan with tremendous potential. Yet, it is necessary that NIE treat the needs as presented by the entire population.

The field of bilingual education has become a major focal point for the improvement of educational achievement of that portion of the American population which is of a different cultural and/or linguistic lineage of which Hispanics comprise the largest group. NIE's Multicultural Bilingual Division has been delegated the responsibility to deal with the educational problems of students of limited English speaking ability. This division is extremely important in dealing with problems of elementary school children to insure that these children gain proficiency in English and achieve academic improvement. Research to measure the effectiveness of such bilingual education programs is a long process before results are able to be calculated. Little research has been conducted on the overall effectiveness of bilingual education in its present application, thus negating the possibility for improvement,continued evaluation, and renewed application in order to strengthen these programs. Therefore, we feel that this research on Hispanics must be undertaken in order to upgrade our data on the educational achievements of these students and to demonstrate the value of such programs as these students continue on to the level of higher education.

Hispanics in the past have benefitted from supportive programs in the areas of reading and math at different educational levels due to their traditionally low achievement in these areas. Yet, the problems centered around the actual causes of the low scores themselves have not been dealt with. Instead, the problems remain undetermined since research was not conducted on the primary causes of low scores and only the secondary consequences manifested on grade point averages are resolved.

Hispanic Americans are eager to participate in educational opportunities including those in higher education. Primarily through such an institution as NIE can we delve into the causes and consequences of the low Hispanic educational achievement. Only through research and development can we understand and eventually implement strategies to resolve these problems at all levels of educational achievement.

Hispanic participation in education declines steadily at the higher levels of education and it drops drastically at the college level. According to the 1970 census, Hispanics comprised approximately 6% of the total population. At the same time, however, only 1.9% of America's college students were of Hispanic heritage. Hispanic graduate students accounted for only 1% of the total graduate school enrollment. Of the bachelor's degrees earned in 1970, Hispanics accounted for only 1.2% of the total. For those earning a doctorate in 1972 - 1973, it was a disparate .8%.

Of all the programs dealing with post-secondary education sponsored by NIE since its inception, only two (2) have specifically pertained to Hispanics, Minority Workshops and Graduate Fellowships. Both programs have set aside 50% of their funds for Hispanic students to gain access to training in leading research centers and to provide Hispanic students with post-graduate training in careers in educational research and development. Such opportunities in post-secondary

education are crucial in the overall development of capable Hispanic leadership. Programs of this nature are significant in order for us to overcome our historically low representation in this nation's colleges and universities, but programs such as these are merely a beginning. Undoubtedly, a post-secondary education will continue to be a key in the qualification and certification of individuals at all levels of the various professions within education, business, and industry in both the public and private sectors of the economy. Therefore, Hispanics must be given an equal opportunity to education.

The problem of low Hispanic representation in institutions of higher education is particularly acute in the Southwest where the majority of the nation's Hispanics reside, especially in California and Texas where we comprise over 16% of the population in each state. Enrollment figures for California State Universities and Colleges indicate that we account for 5.4% of the undergraduate and 3.0% of the graduate students, while for the University of California, the figures drop to 3.3% and 2.8% respectively. Similarly, at the University of Texas in Austin, Hispanics account for 4.1% of the total student enrollment.

Because of the lack of research data available, it is difficult to remedy the serious educational problems confronting Hispanics. This void reflects the need for educational research efforts on Hispanics in the various organizational components of NIE in addition to the current research efforts in the Multicultural/Bilingual Division. NIE must have qualified staff menbers who have the expertise regarding Hispanics in education, if the Institute is to effectively deal with the problems. Presently within the total NIE staff of approximately 320 individuals, only seven (7) are of Hispanic origin. If NIE is going to respond to the Hispanics, the Institute should join in an effort to employ more Hispanics. The institution of more fellowships which is a logical outgrowth from the need for new staff would

also include additional opportunities for Hispanics. Furthermore, such programs would have a beneficial impact on having Hispanics perform the actual research concerning Hispanics themselves. Also, Hispanics should be included in the overall planning of program activities as well as setting the priorities for research.

It is indispensable that our community and its educational problems be understood by NIE for it cannot afford to allow our needs to pass unrecognized. With a more positive relationship between Hispanics and NIE, we will witness a more meaningful utilization of our mutual resources, a greater possibility for quality education through research, and the development of long and short range plans to complement and benefit one another.

The administration has been slow in appointing individuals to fill the vacant positions of the National Council on Educational Research, the policy making body of NIE. Consequently, NIE's efforts to carry out its functions effectively have been hampered. LNESC supports the language in the legislation which insures that members of the board who are not re-appointed remain on until their replacements have been named and confirmed. In the past, there has been Hispanic representation on the Council and we feel that this should continue in order to provide a Hispanic perspective in the overall activities at NIE and also to deal with those educational problems pertaining to the nation's Hispanic community.

The LULAC National Education Service Centers firmly support the concept of NIE to assist this country in providing equal educational opportunity by taking on a vigorous leadership with regard to conducting the overall research and development efforts in the field of education. To this end, we firmly recommend that the NIE authorizations be increased to $110 million for the upcoming

fiscal year with a significant increase in the current funding levels of that amount going into research on bilingual education, and other areas related to Hispanics. We feel that this increase in authorization levels is necessary so that NIE may be able to continue and to expand its mission as mandated by the United States Congress.